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THE SILENT GROVE

DAVID GAIDER | ALEXANDER FREED | CHAD HARDIN

DRAGON AGE™

THE SILENT GROVE

Part 4 of 6

For nearly a decade, King Alistair of Ferelden has ruled with a steady hand, seeing to his homeland's reconstruction after the darkspawn blight. Now—accompanied by the notorious pirate Isabela and the dwarven merchant Varric Tethras—he has journeyed north in search of his long-lost father, King Maric.

While his quest began with information from Prince Claudio Valisti—an Antivan nobleman and member of the Crow assassins—Alistair's travels have taken him far from civilized lands and into the Tellari Swamps. There, he has found the witch Yavana—a woman who supposedly rescued his father from a Crow prison . . .

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MY DARLING.

[illegible]

CHAPTER 4

RETURN TO THE GROVE.

WHY DIDN'T IT KILL US?

SHE CAN SMELL THE OLD BLOOD IN YOU, SON OF KINGS.

YOU HAVE COME A LONG WAY.

DON'T.

I KNEW *MORRIGAN* -- I CERTAINLY DON'T TRUST *YOU.*

MM.

I HAD NO *IDEA* YOU HAD MET MY SISTER.

THEN YOU'LL BE *SHOCKED* TO HEAR HOW I ENCOUNTERED YOUR MOTHER.

YES?

WHAT DO YOU KNOW OF *HER?*

FLEMETH LIKES SUNSETS, TURNING *INTO* THINGS, AND TALKING ABOUT HOW *CLEVER* SHE IS.

I'M ALSO TOLD SHE *POSSESSES* HER DAUGHTERS.

IS THAT RIGHT?

HA!

WHAT'S SO FUNNY?

MORRIGAN FOUND OUT WHAT FLEMETH PLANNED, AND WE *STOPPED* IT --

THAT POOR, CONFUSED CHILD.

IT IS A *GIFT.*

YOU CANNOT UNDERSTAND.

STOP!

GO BACK WHENCE YOU CAME, SON OF KINGS.

NOTHING BUT MISERY AWAITS YOU HERE.

WHEN HAS THAT STOPPED A CHEERFUL BUNCH LIKE US?

DON'T MAKE ME INTRODUCE YOU TO BIANCA.

IT'S ALL RIGHT.

I'VE ONLY COME FOR *ONE* THING.

YOU FREED MY FATHER FROM A CROW PRISON.

TELL ME WHY -- TELL ME WHAT HAPPENED.

VERY WELL.

FOLLOW.

THE *SILENT GROVE.*

BUILT AFTER THE FALL OF THE TEVINTER IMPERIUM, BY THOSE WHO KNEW THAT *DRAGONS* WOULD NEED *PROTECTION.*

WHAT WOULD *DRAGONS* NEED PROTECTING FROM?

THE IGNORANCE OF MANKIND.

HOW MANY *"HEROES"* HUNTED DRAGONS OVER THE CENTURIES, UNTIL ALMOST NONE WERE LEFT?

IT WAS NEARLY A TRAGEDY FOR US ALL.

YES -- *TRAGIC,* THE THOUGHT OF A LAND WITHOUT FLYING MONSTERS.

IN DESTROYING WHAT IT DOES NOT UNDERSTAND, MANKIND WOULD DESTROY *ITSELF.*

THE BLOOD OF DRAGONS IS THE BLOOD OF THE *WORLD.*

ANOTHER SUBJECT BEYOND YOUR COMPREHENSION.

MEANING *YOU* DON'T UNDERSTAND EITHER, BUT IT'S WHAT YOUR MOTHER *TOLD* YOU.

FINE.

WHAT DOES ANY OF THIS HAVE TO DO WITH *MARIC?*

YEARS AGO, MY MOTHER SAVED YOUR FATHER'S LIFE.

HE WAS *PERMITTED* TO RESTORE HIS KINGDOM AND PLAY *RULER* UNTIL HIS CHILDREN WERE GROWN.

BUT AFTER, HE WAS TO COME TO ME *HERE.*

THAT WAS WHAT HE AGREED TO.

WHY BRING HIM TO THE GROVE?

BECAUSE I COULD NOT PERFORM MY TASK ALONE.

BELIEVE ME, I ENJOY AN OATH-AND-DRAGON TALE AS MUCH AS THE NEXT MAN BUT EVEN I KNOW WHEN TO CUT THE CRYPTIC GARBAGE AND REACH THE POINT.

WHAT *HAPPENED* TO HIS FATHER?

DID YOU *KILL* KING MARIC?

I DID NOT KILL HIM -- I CANNOT SPEAK FOR OTHERS.

NOW YOU HAVE ALL THE ANSWERS ANYONE WILL EVER GIVE, SO CONSIDER MY ADVICE A MERCY:

ABANDON YOUR QUEST. WHAT YOU SEEK IS FOREVER BEYOND YOUR REACH.

ENOUGH!

YOU BROUGHT US HERE -- DON'T YOU *DARE* TURN AWAY!

AH!

ALISTAIR!

DAMN IT.

CUT HIM LOOSE, AND LET'S GO.

THE DRAGON LOOKS HUNGRY.

I COULD HAVE SAID THE RIGHT WORDS.

I COULD HAVE OFFERED HER SOMETHING IN TRADE.

I PERMITTED THIS MUCH OUT OF RESPECT FOR YOUR FATHER.

TAKE CONSOLATION IN THE FACT THAT HIS LIFE HAD MEANING.

MOST DO NOT.

I COULD HAVE GOTTEN A BETTER ANSWER, SOMEHOW.

WHAT NEXT?

SAY *SOMETHING,* AT LEAST.

YOU'RE NOT STUPID -- YOU KNEW THE WITCH WOULDN'T BRING OUT YOUR FATHER WITH A CUP OF TEA AND A HUG.

WHAT WERE YOU *EXPECTING?*

JUST...AN ENDING.

EVEN A GRAVE.

YOU'RE A KING -- YOU GET TO WRITE YOUR OWN ENDING.

FOR NOW, LET'S GET BACK TO THE *SHIP.*

I DOUBT YAVANA WANTS US SPENDING THE NIGHT IN HER SWAMP.

AGREED.

AHH!

NEXT TIME, PIERCE THE HEART LIKE YOU'RE *ASKED.*

CLAUDIO!

BASTARD.

WHAT IS THIS?

IF YOU WANTED US DEAD, YOU COULD'VE SAVED US THE TROUBLE AND DONE IT IN ANTIVA.

I COULD HAVE, YES, BUT THIS ISN'T *CROW* BUSINESS.

MY MASTER HAS BEEN LOOKING FOR THE SILENT GROVE FOR YEARS.

ALAS, THE *DRAGON* DOESN'T *LIKE* EXPLORERS -- WE'D NEVER MADE IT THROUGH THE SWAMPS UNTIL TODAY.

MY SINCERE THANKS FOR SHOWING US THE PATH.

WHAT MASTER?

TAKE THE KING ALIVE.

KILL THE OTHERS.

MALDICIÓN...

HAD TO START SOMEWHERE...

BEHIND YOU, VARRIC!

HA! A FERELDEN KING WHO KNOWS HOW TO FIGHT!

STOP!
WE SURRENDER.
WHAT?
IF YOU WANT ME ALIVE, YOU LET ISABELA AND VARRIC GO.
THEN I SURRENDER.
DON'T EVEN THINK OF IT.
CLAUDIO'S A *WORM* AND WE'RE ALL STILL BREATHING.
I HAVEN'T HAD THIS MUCH FUN SINCE--*AH!*
SINCE YOU WERE BEING CHASED BY QUNARI?
I WAS THINKING... ANSELMO'S BACHELOR PARTY.
HUH. I *ACCEPT* YOUR TERMS, KING OF FERELDEN.
BUT *ISABELA* -- MAKE YOUR BED SOMEWHERE *FAR* BEYOND MY NOTICE.

ALISTAIR...

GO BACK TO FERELDEN.

FIND ARL TEAGAN -- HE'LL PAY YOU -- AND TELL HIM WHAT HAPPENED.

THANK YOU BOTH.

WE SHOULD PROBABLY GET TO THE SHIP, RIVAINI.

BEFORE THE CROCODILES EAT US.

YES.

AND BEFORE YOU BLEED TO DEATH.

-GH!-

THAT WOULD BE BEST.

WE'RE NOT GOING TO THE SHIP, ARE WE?

NOT UNTIL I SLIT CLAUDIO'S THROAT AND GET HIS PRISONER BACK.

I WAS HOPING YOU'D SAY THAT...

TO BE CONTINUED!

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